

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: Prospects for More Violence

The demonstrations of the past week have broken the political stalemate and superficial calm that has existed for much of the martial law period. There probably will be further open opposition in coming months, possibly including more short strikes, and a consequent hardening of the regime's positions and tactics. The gulf between society and its rulers has widened, and efforts by moderates in the regime and by the Church to create a dialogue will be less effective or shunted aside.

The main impetus behind recent events has come from the younger generation, now popularly referred to as the "lost generation," which is alienated from its rulers and believes it has little to lose by showing its anger. The suppression of Solidarity destroyed its hope for broad political and economic reforms. This group also is angry that the authorities are seeking to take back many of the concessions granted earlier.

Broad sections of society share these frustrations but are less willing to act. In some public demonstrations, especially where the size of the crowds provide some anonymity, many Poles will be drawn into protesting.

Anger and frustration among workers of all ages will be kept high by the more than 80-percent jump in the cost of living this year. Many are rapidly running through savings and fear possible layoffs. In addition, food supplies have not increased from the low levels of last year, and meat supplies are likely to worsen.

Leaders of Solidarity, who have made some headway in reestablishing their organizational structure, face a difficult task in channeling this frustration. They

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are not seeking a violent confrontation, because they realize they would lose. Instead, they are looking toward a longer term rebuilding process and hope periodically to demonstrate their strength in order eventually to force concessions.

The Church will be in an increasingly difficult position. It will not abandon its efforts to prevent bloodshed and to prod the regime into concessions, but its leaders also will fear that their pleas for calm will alienate many Catholics. Opposition forces will continue to use the Church as a rallying point for their activities, which in turn almost certainly will lead to more criticism by the regime.

Regime's Response

The demonstrations will vindicate those in the regime who have argued that martial law restrictions were eased too quickly. It also will weaken the resolve of those who have argued for some genuine steps toward reconciliation.

Premier Jaruzelski is likely to move toward a harder line. He still commands the support of the military. The party, including leading conservative Stefan Olszowski, is still too weak, dispirited, and ineffective to challenge him.

Jaruzelski's most difficult task will be to control the extreme conservatives in the party and the Army. If they gain sufficient strength to force more purges in the universities or the official abolition of Solidarity, many of the restraints that have kept popular tempers in check will have been removed.

The Soviets

The recent demonstrations are unlikely to have surprised the Soviets, whose public commentaries repeatedly have acknowledged that resistance remains a problem and that martial law will be necessary to preserve order for

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some time to come. Moscow will view the suppression of the disturbances as welcome confirmation of Jaruzelski's determination to maintain order and, as a result, is unlikely to show any increased enthusiasm for his rivals.

Outlook

The widening gulf has brought Poland closer to the point where a popular explosion could occur. At a minimum, the increasing social activism and the regime's tough attitude have increased the prospects for additional violent clashes.

The civilian police, numbering 25,000 special riot-trained and experienced troops backed up by 450,000 regular and reserve police, should be able to maintain physical control. If the situation warrants, the authorities will not hesitate to call on the Army. If this occurs, Poland will become locked in to a cycle of repression and resistance.

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